

[No. 13.]

*This pamphlet and next one were
incorrectly bound here between
covers and first page of text of "on the
disposal of sewage."*

EXTRACTS

FROM THE

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE

ON

Public Health, Vital Statistics and Climatology

OF THE

ONTARIO MEDICAL ASSOCIATION.

To the President and Members of the Ontario Medical Association:

GENTLEMEN,—Your Committee on Public Health, Vital Statistics and Climatology beg leave to report as follows:—

During the past year the interest of the people of this Province in sanitary matters has continued to increase. Not only has this been manifest amongst the members of our own profession, ever active to advance the physical welfare of the people, but it has been shown in various other ways: by more frequent paragraphs in the press, by discussions at the meetings of societies, by the conversation of persons with whom members of your Committee have come in contact, by the action of the legislative and governmental bodies—Federal, Provincial and Municipal. Of course there are many of these latter bodies which have not yet aroused from their lethargic attitude as regards matters affecting the lives and health of the community. And there are individuals who assume to give judgment on subjects regarding which they are ignorant, and who court a cheap popularity by acting as obstructionists of a penny-wise sort. But this does not do away with the noticeable fact that the general tendency is onwards, and that there is a very marked interest at the present time.

Your Committee would urge upon the members of the Association the desirability of seizing upon this opportune time to stir up a still greater interest and to give it a

practical shape. No doubt your Committee on Legislation will report to you the additions to sanitary legislation which were recommended to the attention of the Legislature during the last Session of Parliament, and amongst these the proposition to establish a Local Board of Health with its Medical Health Officer in each Municipality or group of Municipalities. We regret to say that it was found impracticable to have these changes adopted in the last Session of an expiring House, but there is little doubt, from the favourable consideration which they received, that if properly supported by you the most essential of them will be adopted at the next Session of Parliament. It must be quite evident that whatever sanitary improvements may be recommended, either by you as an Association or by the Provincial Board of Health, or by individual members, or from any other source, they cannot put themselves into force, but that there must be somebody specially charged to keep on the alert regarding such matters, and to give them that practical effect and to keep them in operation in that practical way by which alone these beneficial results can be obtained. You must and do know from observation that such functions form but a very small and much neglected part of the mass of business occupying the time and attention of a Municipal Council; and as to shaping and carrying out plans regarding the maintenance of public health in the individual locality, and superintending the details in regard thereto, does not all this require the services of a medical man—a man conversant with the causes and nature of disease and of morbid influences?

That there is pressing need for the services of such an officer in remedying unhealthy conditions must be abundantly manifest to you. Our overcrowded and ill-ventilated schools, factories and other buildings, our disease-breeding ponds and ditches, neglected slaughter-houses and other nuisances, and above all the pestilential contamination of air and drinking-water by the improper modes now so common of disposing of excreta, are all reminders well known to you of the good that may, without unnecessary annoyance or interference, be achieved by a judicious Medical Health Officer and Board of Health.

In connection with this last named subject your Committee begs leave to present a few advanced copies or proof-sheets of a pamphlet about to be issued by the Provincial Board, endeavouring to meet, in a practical way, some of the difficulties now existing in connection with it. But how manifold more will be the usefulness of this when we can get in each locality an organization willing, and whose duty it shall be, to work the matter out, and assist householders in regard to it.

Your Committee begs leave, at the same time, to submit a few copies of a circular also about to be issued with the object of obtaining information and awakening interest

page 3 follows p. 6 of "By-laws suggested"

in connection with Local Boards, and to which it trusts the members of this Association will respond, the more so since the circular deals with some questions upon which you were so desirous of obtaining information that you instructed a former Committee to issue a similar circular. It is further hoped that the whole profession will give to this circular the same general response which you expected would be given to that which you wished to have sent out.

Another subject may be alluded to, and a short and earnest appeal in connection with it may be made through you to the members of the profession. The annual destruction of life amongst those upon whom we set our best hopes and affections—our children—has been a source of deep concern to successive Committees of this Association, and to the Association generally. Your Committee is of opinion that this destruction of children might be prevented, or very materially lessened, by the adoption of proper precautions; also, that such precautions, unless they be of a systematic character, are largely frustrated by the avarice and selfish carelessness of individuals—not of all, but of some. And if only *some* are allowed to scatter the seeds of infectious diseases, our safety in this respect is gone. The Legislature has enjoined upon the Municipal authorities the carrying out of such systems, and has, as in all other matters of executive, given to these Municipal authorities the power of enforcing these systems. But it would be a most painful thing to find any section, even though it be only a small section, of our profession arrayed in antagonism to that which bids fair to be the means of saving life and health,—to find in such a position members of that profession which has furnished so many noble examples of heroism, quiet and unobtrusive, but none the less real, in the devotion of time, talent, health and life to the cause of suffering humanity, to the tasks of investigating and combatting the causes of disease, and of stemming the tide of destructive epidemics.

Your Committee is glad to be able to report that there are not many who will allow trifling objections to stand in the way of measures calculated to shield our helpless little ones from criminal carelessness or indifference. There is only one of these objections to which your Committee thinks it necessary to allude; and to it we would allude, as it is one that exists in the minds of some few members of our profession, who possess a high sense of honour, but coupled, we would respectfully add, with a mistaken sense of their obligations, which, in the opinion of this Committee, can never require them to be parties to an attempt to hide the existence of danger, and allow it to overhang the defenceless heads of our poor little children.

Your Committee would again recommend that the efforts which are being made to

suggested

have Hygiene more extensively taught in our schools in lieu of less important subjects receive your active and energetic support.

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[Clauses referring to Vital Statistics and Climatology in Ontario and the Dominion generally; and to the communication from the Ontario Women's Christian Temperance Union.]

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Thanking you for the attentive hearing you have given to this Report, and hoping that through your recommendations the profession will respond to the appeals made in it, It is now respectfully submitted.

After the reception of the Report the following resolutions were carried unanimously :—

Moved by Dr. Campbell, seconded by Dr. McLean,—That this Association would earnestly press upon the attention of the Government the necessity of enacting such laws as will secure the appointment of a Board of Health and Medical Health Officer for each Municipality or suitable group of Municipalities in the Province.

Moved by Dr. R. Carney, seconded by Dr. Ferguson,—That this Association would urge upon its members the desirability of advocating, in their respective localities, the adoption of the suggestion set forth in the resolution relating to the appointment of Local Boards.